

## Message Text

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20

ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AID-05 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-07 FRB-03

INR-07 NSAE-00 USIA-06 TRSE-00 XMB-02 OPIC-03 SP-02

CIEP-01 LAB-04 SIL-01 OMB-01 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 L-03

NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SS-15 /084 W

----- 030978

R 081958Z SEP 76

FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9022

AMEMBASSY BOGOTA

INFO AMCONSUL MEDELLIN

PANCANAL

USCINCSO

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EO 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, EWWT, PN, CO

SUBJECT: THE ATRATO CANAL

REF: BOGOTA 8722

1. COLOMBIA'S DECISION TO BUILD A INTER-OCEANIC CANAL BY LINKING THE ATRATO AND SAN JUAN RIVERS PRODUCED A BIT OF WORRY AND A TOUCH OF PIQUE IN THE PANAMANIAN PRESS.

2. SEMI-INDEPENDENT "LA ESTRELLA", OLDEST AND MOST RESPONSIBLE PANAMANIAN NEWSPAPER, DISCUSSED THE COLOMBIAN PROJECT IN A LONG EDITORIAL ON AUGUST 25. EDITORIAL NOTED COLOMBIA'S "UNQUESTIONABLE RIGHT" TO BUILD THE CANAL, BUT GROUSED OVER GOC'S "EMPHASIS" ON HOW ATRATO CANAL IS NOT INTENDED TO COMPETE WITH THE PANAMA CANAL, AND MORE POINTEDLY, HOW ATRATO WILL "RELIEVE CONGESTION" IN THE PANAMA CANAL. THE TRUTH, DECLARED THE EDITORIAL, LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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(AND CORRECTLY SO) IS THAT THE PANAMA CANAL IS NOT

CONGESTED IN ANY WAY. RATHER, IT CONTINUED, TRAFFIC HAS DIMINISHED AND SEEMS LIKELY TO CONTINUE THAT TREND.

3. FOUR DAYS LATER (AUGUST 29) "ESTRELLA" CARRIED LETTER FROM FORMER POLITICIAN, AND PRESENT JOURNALIST, RICARDO PARDO, WHICH TOOK COLOMBIA TO TASK MORE SHARPLY FOR ITS DECISION TO BUILD A CANAL. HIS LETTER SNAPPED AT "LOPEZ MICHELSON'S GOVERNMENT" FOR PROCLAIMING ITS SOLIDARITY WITH PANAMA IN HER CANAL "CAUSE" ON THE ONE HAND, AND YET ON THE OTHER THREATENING PANAMA'S FUTURE CANAL REVENUES BY THE ATRATO PROJECT.

4. COMMENT: DESPITE QUERULOUS TONE OF EDITORIAL AND LETTER IT IS SURPRISING, IN EMBASSY'S VIEW, THAT REACTION HERE HAS BEEN SO LOW KEY. THE PRO-GOVERNMENT MEDIA HAVE UTTERED NARY A WORD PRO OR CON. WHILE IT MAY BE CYNICAL, WE SUSPECT REASON FOR THEIR SILENCE ON A MATTER OF CONSIDERABLE CONCERN TO THIS COUNTRY IS JUST THAT TOUCHED ON BY PARDO - COLOMBIA'S SOLIDARITY WITH PANAMA IN PANAMA'S CANAL CAMPAIGN.

JORDEN

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NNN

## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptoning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01 JAN 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** CONSTRUCTION, PRESS COMMENTS, ATRATO, CANALS  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 08 SEP 1976  
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**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
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**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
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**Disposition Date:** 28 MAY 2004  
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**Film Number:** D760340-0193  
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